

Prevent Falling on Stairs

Stairs in the home present one of the greatest challenges in fall prevention. More than three quarters on all stair falls take place in the home. We tend to fall more often on short flights of steps; in one study 80% of the falls on steps were on stairs with five or fewer steps. Most falls occur on the top or bottom three steps.



- Use non-skid contrasting tape, rubber stair treads, or coated skid resistant surface treatment on non-carpeted stairs. Apply strips of tape to dry, clean surfaces at one-inch intervals. Three strips of tape provide good traction on a typical step.
- Check carpeting to make sure it is firmly attached along stairs. Make repairs to worn or loose carpet promptly. Select carpet pattern that doesn't visually hide the edge of steps, leading one to believe the steps have ended when they haven't.
- Avoid placing throw rugs or scatter rugs at the top or bottom of stairways, or properly secure with carpet tape to prevent slippage.
- Install stair handrails on both sides.
- Be sure stairway has high-wattage lighting. Install on/off switches at both the top and bottom of stairs.
- Never leave books, purse, packages or other objects on stairs.
- Watch out for a single step since these trip persons frequently.
- Avoid or exercise caution when the following physical conditions are present on stairs:
 - absence of reachable handrails or handrails placed too low
 - ungraspable railings
 - obstacles on steps, non-uniform step dimensions, or inadequately sized treads
 - dangerous surface materials such as wax, poor surface maintenance, camouflaged tread surfaces, thick or poorly secured tread coverings mats and nosing caps
 - visual distractions in surroundings
- Avoid the following practices that can contribute to stair falls: hurrying, inattention, obscured vision, carrying large loads, and shoes that are easy to slip in.